



FTAA-2603-1193: Application received for referral of the project under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 – Stage 1 decisions

Project Name: University of Auckland Student Centre and Library

Date submitted:	17 April 2026	Tracking #: 26-BRF-00938	
Security level:	In-Confidence	MfE priority:	Urgent

	Action sought:	Response by:
To Hon Chris Bishop, Minister for Infrastructure	Decisions on recommendations in Table A	24 April 2026

Actions for Minister's Office staff	Return the signed briefing to: FTAreferrals@mfe.govt.nz Send email to Ministers to invite written comments
Number of appendices: 3	Appendices: 1. Statutory framework summary 2. Application documents for the University of Auckland Student Centre and Library (the project) 3. List of the Māori groups referred to in section 18(2)

Ministry for the Environment contacts:

Position	Name	Cell phone	1 st contact
Principal Author	Rebecca Burton		
Acting Manager	Ben Bunting	s 9(2)(a)	✓
Acting General Manager	Stephanie Frame	s 9(2)(a)	

Project location

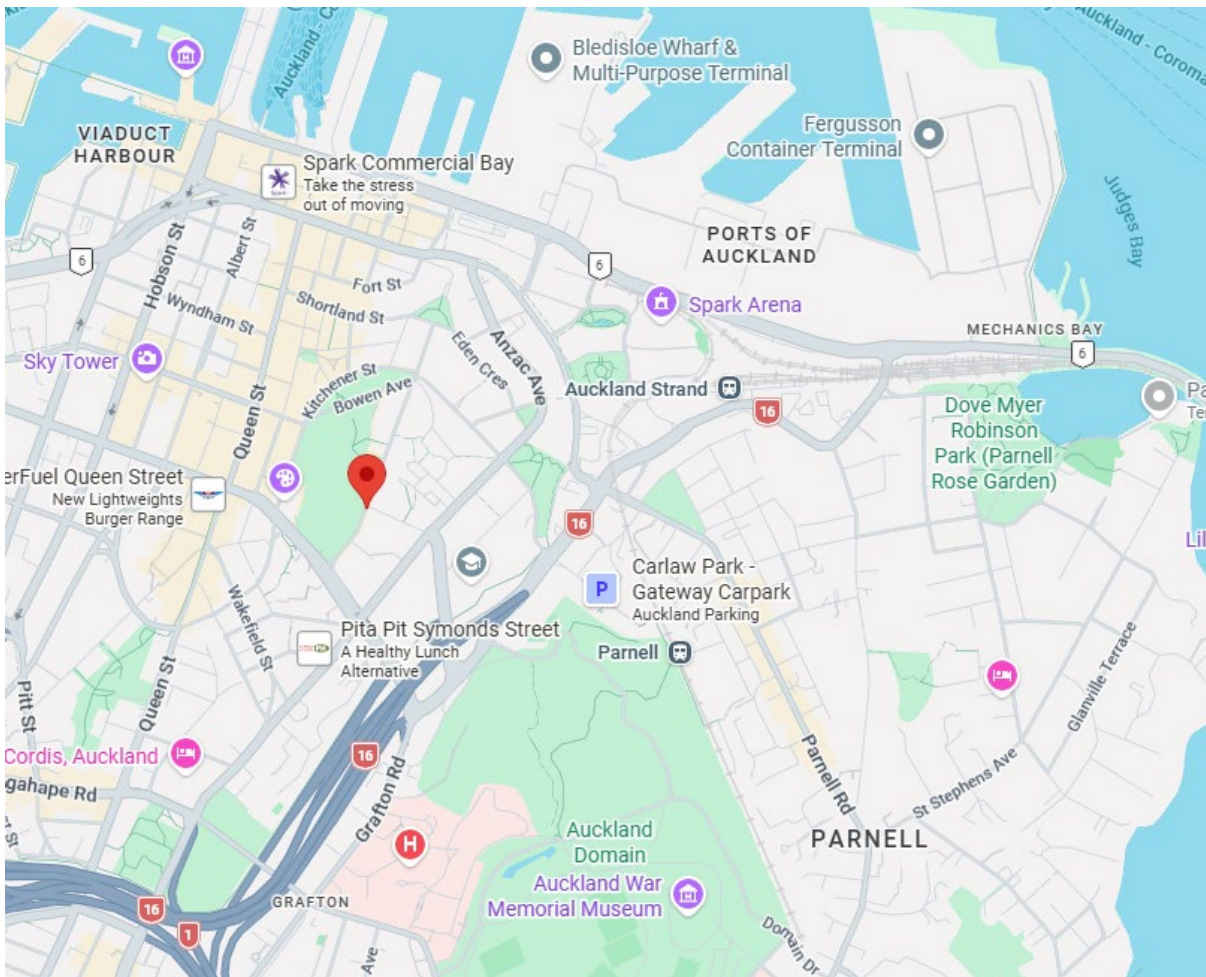


Figure 1: General location of the proposed project (identified by the red marker).

Key messages

1. This briefing seeks your initial decisions on an application from the University of Auckland (the applicant) to refer the University of Auckland Student Centre and Library project (the project) under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (the Act) to the fast-track approvals process.
2. At this stage you can either decline an application for the reasons set out section 21, or provide the application to, and invite comments from, the parties identified in section 17. If you do not decline the application, you will receive a further briefing following receipt of comments, to inform your final decision on whether to refer the project.
3. The project involves the construction of a new student centre and library within the existing Auckland University campus, on the corner of Princes Street and Alfred Street, Auckland.
4. The key components of the project include:
 - a. demolition of the existing Student Union complex
 - b. construction of a new building that will accommodate:
 - i. a range of high-quality student study, teaching and learning, social and

- event spaces and food, beverage and retail
 - ii. a new library; and
 - iii. a visitor hub containing welcoming spaces and an exhibition space
 - c. landscaping, and a large-scale public plaza which will serve as a gathering and event space.
 - d. supporting infrastructure and associated works including earthworks and servicing.
- 5. The project will require the proposed approvals:
 - a. resource consents under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) for land use, water, and discharge activities
 - b. archaeological authority under the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014 for works within a recorded archaeological site.
- 6. We have undertaken initial analysis of the referral application, and this is presented along with our considerations and recommendations in Table A.
- 7. We have decided the application is complete and complies with section 14 of the Act, as the application complies with section 13 requirements, may be capable of satisfying the criteria in section 22 and does not appear to involve an ineligible activity. The applicable fee and levy have been paid.
- 8. We recommend you progress consideration of the referral application to the next stage of analysis (Stage 2) and invite written comments from the parties prescribed in section 17(1) of the Act being:
 - a. Auckland Council as the relevant local authority
 - b. the Minister for the Environment, the Minister for Māori Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti and the Minister for Māori Development
 - c. The following relevant Portfolio Ministers:
 - i. Minister for Arts Culture and Heritage – as the project located within a recorded archaeological site causing an archaeological authority to be required
 - ii. Minister of Education – as the project is located within the Auckland University campus and on land gazetted for education purposes
 - iii. Minister for Tertiary Education - as the project is located within a tertiary education campus, and the applicant is the Auckland University being a tertiary education provider
 - d. Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga as the relevant administering agency
 - e. the identified Māori groups as listed in Appendix 3.
- 9. We recommend that you invite written comments from the following persons as additional parties under section 17(5) of the Act:
 - a. Minister for Economic Growth – as the project may contribute to economic growth.
 - b. Minister for Regional Development – as the project may contribute to regional development outcomes for the Auckland Region.

Action sought

- 10. Please indicate your decisions on the recommendations in Table A.

Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "B. W. Bunting". The letters are cursive and fluid, with a small dot at the end of the final stroke.

Ben Bunting
Acting Manager – Fast-track Operations

Table A: Stage 1 analysis

Project details	Project Name	Applicant	Project Location			
	The University of Auckland Student Centre and Library	University of Auckland	Princes Street and Alfred Street, Auckland City Legal description: Lot 1 DP 151178, Section 1 SO Plan 46532, Section 1 SO Plan 44422			
Project description	<p>The project involves the construction of a new student centre and library within the existing University of Auckland (UoA) campus.</p> <p>Key components of the project include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demolition of the existing Student Union complex • construction of a new building that will accommodate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ a range of high-quality student study, teaching and learning, social and event spaces and food, beverage and retail ○ a new library; and ○ a visitor hub containing welcoming spaces and an exhibition space • landscaping, and a large-scale public plaza which will serve as a gathering and event space. • supporting infrastructure and associated works including earthworks and servicing. <p>The project is located within a recorded archaeological site, being the Albert Barracks Wall causing an archaeological authority to be required for works in and around this area.</p>					
Consultation undertaken	As required by section 11, the applicant has consulted with:					
	<i>Relevant local authorities</i>	<i>Relevant iwi authorities, hapū and Treaty settlement entities</i>	<i>Relevant MACA groups</i>	<i>Ngā hapū o Ngāti Porou</i>	<i>Relevant administering agencies</i>	<i>Holder of land to be exchanged</i>
	Auckland Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ngāti Whātua Orākei b. Ngāti Paoa c. Ngāti Te Ata d. Ngāti Whanaunga e. Te Akitai Waiohua f. Waikato-Tainui g. Te Patukirikiri h. Te Ahiwaru - Waiohua i. Ngāti Tamaoho j. Ngāti Whātua o Kaipara k. Ngāti Maru l. Ngāti Tamaterā m. Te Kawerau ā Maki n. Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki o. Te Runanga o Ngāti Whātua 	Not applicable	Not applicable	Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga	Not applicable.
Section 22 assessment criteria						
The project is an infrastructure or development project that would have significant regional or national benefits [section 22(1)(a)]	<p><i>The Minister <u>must</u> consider a relevant Government policy statement (GPS) [s22(1A)]</i> The only current GPS is the Government Policy Statement on Grocery Competition. As this project does not involve a supermarket development or grocery-related activities, there is no GPS relevant to your decision.</p> <p>You may consider any of the following matters, or any other matters the Minister considers relevant:</p> <p><i>The project has been identified as a priority project in a central or local government, or sector plan or strategy or a central government infrastructure priority list [s22(2)(a)(i)]</i> The project is not provided for or identified as a priority project by central or local government. However, the applicant has assessed the project against the Government's International Education Going for Growth Plan 2025 (IEGGP) which aims to double the value of international education by 2034, increasing its direct contribution to GDP from \$3.6b to \$7.2b. The applicant notes that the UoA is New Zealand's top-ranked university and is best positioned to deliver on the IEGGP vision. The applicant considers that the proposed Student Centre and Library will support the national vision as identified in the IEGGP by maintaining and strengthening UoA's regional and national significance, ensuring its ongoing contribution to the region and the country's economic, social, and knowledge-based outcome.</p>					

	<p><i>Will deliver new regionally or nationally significant infrastructure or enable the continued functioning of existing regionally or nationally significant infrastructure [s22(2)(a)(ii)]</i> The applicant has noted that Universities fall within the definition of 'additional infrastructure' within the National Policy Statement for Infrastructure (NPS-I). The applicant has described the UoA as the highest ranked university in New Zealand and one of the top 100 universities in the world, and stating the university is both a regionally and nationally significant educational infrastructure asset.</p> <p>The applicant considers the project to be a critical component of a university, saying that a modern and well-facilitated Student Centre and Library is critical to accommodate current student demand and future growth. The application goes on to state that quality Student Centre and Library facilities play a key role in enhancing the student experience, fostering academic success, and supporting research and collaboration, thereby contributing to the University's regional and national impact.</p> <p>The applicant considers that the project will ensure the UoA can continue to operate and provide services and provide for the changing needs and demands of current and future populations. Given the important role that the project is deemed to have within the efficient operation of a university, the applicant considers the project can enable the continued functioning of existing regionally or nationally significant infrastructure.</p> <p><i>Will increase the supply of housing, address housing needs, or contribute to a well-functioning urban environment (within the meaning of policy 1 of the National Policy Statement on Urban Development 2020) [s22(2)(a)(iii)]</i> The applicant states that the project will contribute to a well-functioning urban environment by being highly accessible to existing and planned public transport links, along with existing cycleways and shared paths.</p> <p>The applicant highlights that the project is adequately sized to meet the current and future needs of the University, including catering to the current student population of approximately 47,000 students while providing sufficient size for future growth.</p> <p><i>Will deliver significant economic benefits [s22(2)(a)(iv)]</i> The applicant has stated that the project will help sustain and potentially expand UoA's already significant contribution to the Auckland regional economy and New Zealand's national education and knowledge economy.</p> <p>The Economic Impact Assessment (EIA) commissioned by the applicant for the project concludes that the one-time construction and development activity is estimated to contribute approximately \$463.3 million in GDP for the Auckland region over the five-year development timeframe, supporting a total of 3,471 full-time equivalent (FTE) years over that period.</p> <p>The EIA also states that there are several non-monetised regional and national benefits of the project, including enabling efficient use of existing education infrastructure, supporting international education growth, supporting student productivity, retention, and academic outcomes, and enhancing international education exports and associated expenditure.</p> <p>The application notes that the project is likely to have economic benefits that extend to a national level. One example given is that the UoA attracts international students, which further contributes to national GDP through an increase in spending.</p> <p><i>Will support climate change mitigation, including the reduction or removal of greenhouse gas emissions [s22(2)(a)(vii)]</i> The application outlines that the project has been informed by the University's Te Rautaki Aronga Toitū – Sustainability Strategy and Te Taumata Tukuwaro-kore – Net Zero Carbon Strategy, and therefore, the project will likely contribute to an overall reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. The applicant highlights that the existing Student Union and General Library buildings on site are old and perform poorly from an environmental perspective, whilst the new building is intended to be designed targeting the current 6-Star Greenstar Rating requirements, representing a significant improvement in the environmental performance.</p> <p><i>Is consistent with local or regional planning documents, including spatial strategies [s22(2)(a)(x)]</i> From a regional perspective the applicant has assessed the Auckland Regional Policy Statement (RPS) and Auckland Unitary Plan and considers the project to be consistent with the relevant objectives and policies.</p> <p>The Auckland Plan 2050 is Auckland's long-term spatial plan which directs growth toward a quality compact urban form, concentrating intensification within the existing urban area. The applicant considers that the project will assist in meeting the aims of the Auckland Plan, creating a facility that responds to the changing needs of the University and provides learning facilities that can attract and retain talent within Auckland.</p> <p>The City Centre Masterplan (CCMP) is Auckland Council's guiding document for the central city, setting the strategic direction for the city over the next 20 years. The overarching aim is to shape a city centre that is more connected, livable, sustainable, and economically prosperous. The Learning Quarter is one of eight transformational moves listed within the CCMP and seeks to improve the physical connections between the university, the city centre, and the city fringe by fully integrating the Learning Quarter into the heart of the city. The applicant considers that the project assists in the overall vision of the CCMP.</p>
Referring the project to the fast-track approvals process [section 22(1)(b)]	<p><i>Would facilitate the project, including by enabling it to be processed in a more timely and cost-effective way than under normal processes [s22(1)(b)(i)]</i> The applicant has listed the below benefits of using the fast-track process for this project as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • securing the requisite approvals through the fast-track process instead of through the standard RMA and HNZPTA processes will enable the project to be progressed in a more timely and cost-effective way • given the scale of the project, the applicant anticipates that an application for resource consent would be notified under the RMA, at least on a limited basis. Notification of the application would substantially increase the potential for delays to the commencement of the project • obtaining approvals under the FTAA could result in the project being approved up to three years earlier than it might otherwise be under the RMA.

	<p><i>Is unlikely to materially affect the efficient operation of the fast-track approvals process [s22(1)(b)(iii)]</i></p> <p>The applicant believes that the project upholds section 22(1)(b)(ii) due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the only approvals being sought are resource consent and an archaeological authority reducing the complexity of the project the substantive application for the project will be supported by comprehensive technical assessments. 		
Minister invites comments	<p><i>You must copy the application to, and invite written comments from [s17(1)]:</i></p> <p>a. Relevant local authorities: Auckland Council</p> <p>b. Minister for the Environment, the Minister for Māori Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti and the Minister for Māori Development</p> <p>c. Relevant portfolio Minister(s):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage – as the project is located within a recorded archaeological site causing an archaeological authority to be required. Minister of Education – as the project is located within the Auckland University campus, on land gazetted for education purposes. Minister for Tertiary Education- as the project is located within a tertiary education campus, and the applicant is the Auckland University; being a Tertiary Education provider. <p>d. Relevant administering agencies: Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga</p> <p>e. Māori groups identified in Attachment 3</p>	<p><i>You may copy the application to, and invite written comments from, any other person [s17(5)]:</i></p> <p>a. Minister for Economic Growth – as the project may contribute to economic growth.</p> <p>b. Minister for Regional Development- as the project may contribute to regional development outcomes for the Auckland Region.</p>	<p><i>The Minister may request further information about a referral application from the applicant, the relevant local authorities, or the relevant administering agencies to be provided within the time frame specified in the request.</i></p> <p>No further information is required for this stage of the process.</p>
Recommendations			Minister's decision
a. Note that section 25 of the Act permits you to decline the referral application without inviting comments from the relevant local authorities, the Minister for the Environment, any relevant Ministers, any relevant administering agencies and the Māori groups identified in the list provided.			Noted
b. Note that you have not yet provided the application to, nor sought any written comments on it from, the parties listed in section 17(1) but that you are required to do so if you do not decline the application under section 21 of the Act.			Noted
c. Note that section 17(5) of the Act permits you to forward an application to, and invite written comments from, any other person.			Noted
d. Note that if comments have been sought and provided within the required time frame you are required to consider it, along with the referral application, before deciding to decline the application.			Noted
e. Note that section 20 of the Act permits you to request further information from the applicant or relevant local authorities or relevant administering agencies at any time before you decide whether to accept or decline an application.			Noted
f. Agree to progress the University of Auckland Student Centre and Library project to the Stage 2 analysis (invite written comments and request section 18 Treaty report).			Yes / No
g. Agree to provide the application to, and invite written comments from:			
i. Auckland Council as the relevant local authorities under section 17(1)(a)			Yes / No
ii. Minister for the Environment, the Minister for Māori Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti and the Minister for Māori Development under section 17(1)(b)			Yes / No
iii. The Minister for Arts Culture and Heritage, Minister of Education and the Minister for Tertiary Education as the relevant portfolio Ministers under section 17(1)(b)			Yes / No
iv. Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga as the relevant administering agency under section 17(1)(c)			Yes / No
v. The parties in Appendix 3 as the Māori groups under section 17(1)(d)			Yes / No
h. Agree to provide the application to and invite written comments from the following additional persons under section 17(5):			
i. Minister for Economic Growth			Yes / No
ii. Minister for Regional Development			Yes / No

i. Note that you have agreed to delegate to the Secretary for the Environment your responsibility to send all correspondence, other than to Ministers.	Noted
j. Agree to send the email to invite written comments from Ministers.	Yes / No

Signed:

Hon Chris Bishop
Minister for Infrastructure

Date:

Appendix 1: Statutory framework summary

1. You are the sole decision maker for referral applications. If you accept a referral application, then the whole or part of the project will be referred to the fast-track approvals process.
2. If a Treaty settlement, the Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act 2011, the Ngā Rohe Moana o Ngā Hapū o Ngāti Porou Act 2019, a Mana Whakahono ā Rohe or a joint management agreement provides for consideration of any document or procedural requirements, you must, where relevant:
 - a. give the document the same or equivalent effect through this process as it would have under any specified Act; and
 - b. comply with any applicable procedural requirements.
3. You must decline a referral application if:
 - a. you are satisfied the project does not meet the referral criteria in s22
 - b. you are satisfied the project involves an ineligible activity (s5)
 - c. you consider you do not have adequate information to inform your decision.
4. You may decline an application for any other reason, including those set out in s21(5) and even if the application meets the s22 referral criteria.
5. You can decline an application before or after inviting comments under s17(1). However, if comments have been sought and provided within the required time frame, you must consider them, along with the referral application, before deciding to decline the application.
6. If you do not decline a referral application at this initial stage you must copy the application to, and invite written comments from:
 - a. the relevant local authorities,
 - b. the Minister for the Environment and relevant portfolio Ministers
 - c. the relevant administering agencies
 - d. the Māori groups identified by the responsible agency
 - e. the owners of Māori land in the project area:
 - f. you may provide the application to and invite comments from any other person.
7. You can request further information from an applicant, any relevant local authority or any relevant administering agency at any time before you decide to decline or accept a referral application (see section 20 of the Act).
8. However, if further information has been sought and provided within the required time frame you must consider it, along with the referral application, before deciding to decline the application.

Appendix 2: Application documents for the University of Auckland Student Centre and Library project:

Appendix 3: List of the Māori groups referred to in section 18(2)

Name of group	Type of group (section of Act)
Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Whātua	iwi authority (s18(2)(a)); mandated entity (s18(2)(d))
Ngāti Whātua o Ōrākei Trust	iwi authority (s18(2)(a)); Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a))
Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki Trust	iwi authority (s18(2)(a)); Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a))
Te Kawerau Iwi Settlement Trust	iwi authority (s18(2)(a)); Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a))
Ngāti Tamaoho Settlement Trust	iwi authority (s18(2)(a)); Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a));
Ngāti Maru Rūnanga Trust	iwi authority (s18(2)(a)); Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a)); mandated entity (s18(2)(d))
Ngāti Pāoa Iwi Trust	iwi authority (s18(2)(a)); Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a))
Te Patukirikiri Iwi Trust	iwi authority s18(2)(a); Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a)); mandated entity (s18(2)(d))
Ngāti Tamaterā Treaty Settlement Trust	iwi authority s18(2)(a); Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a)); mandated entity (s18(2)(d))
Te Ākitai Waiohua Waka Taua Inc	iwi authority (s18(2)(a));
Te Ākitai Waiohua Settlement Trust	Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a)), mandated entity (s18(2)(d))
Ngāti Te Ata Claims Support Whānau Trust	iwi authority (s18(2)(a)), mandated entity (s18(2)(d))
Hako Tūpuna Trust	iwi authority (s18(2)(a)); Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a)); mandated entity (s18(2)(d))
Tūpuna Taonga o Tāmaki Makaurau Trust/ Whenua Haumi Roroa o Tāmaki Makaurau Limited Partnership	Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a))
Taonga o Marutūāhu Trustee Limited/ Marutūāhu Rōpū Limited Partnership	Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a))
Ngāti Koheriki Claims Committee	Mandated entity (s18(2)(d))
Te Ahiwaru Waiohua	other Māori group with relevant interests (s18(2)(k))